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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 BAGHDAD 001359

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SUBJECT: APRIL 15 MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) SUMMARY: During the April 15 meeting of the Ministerial Committee on National Security (MCNS), ministers discussed the following issues:

-- Reactions to the April 12 Attacks: MNF-I Commanding General Petraeus argued that security at the Council of Representatives may have been breached due to the culture of exempting GOI officials from security scans. PM Maliki and DPM Barham Salih asked for Coalition assistance in setting up temporary bridging to compensate for the destruction of the Sarafiya Bridge, but Petraeus said he did not think Coalition bridging supplies were large enough to span the necessary gap. Maliki ordered an investigation into how security checkpoints near the bridge were breached.

-- Karkh and Doura: Maliki expressed frustration that clearing operations were not going on in the areas of Karkh and Doura, suggesting that perhaps troops should be moved from Rusafa. Petraeus argued forcefully that Maliki should not use the MCNS to order troop movements, adding that even if the entire U.S. Army were deployed there would never be enough troops to engage in clearing operations across all of Baghdad simultaneously. He argued that there was a prioritized plan for clearance of areas and before ordering any changes, the BOC commander should be given the opportunity to assess and report back on the risks involved in changing the plan.

-- Umm Qasr: Iraqi Joint Headquarters Commander General Babakr said that the Iranians were creeping more and more into Iraqi territorial waters. The PM said the GOI needed to tell the Iranians to stop; Petraeus agreed. Babakr also said the Port of Entry facilities were under the control of parties and militias. Acting Justice Minister Safa al-Safi was tasked with reporting to Maliki on the situation.

-- Basra: Maliki decided to lift the license for a planned April 16 demonstration in Basra against Provincial Governor Waeli. Despite the suggestion of Minister of Interior Bolani, he decided against a curfew. Al-Safi blamed the entire situation on Waeli. Maliki said he had no power to remove Waeli.

-- National Security Strategy: National Security Advisor Rubaie asked for security ministry participation in a working group tasked with drafting a National Security Strategy. Petraeus said the Strategy would be a good opportunity to raise and address certain issues within Iraq's national security architecture, such as intelligence agencies and the role of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief.

-- MOI/MOD Friction: Bolani said friction sometimes existed

in the field between the ministries of Interior and Defense. He cited the case an MOI officer arrested by someone from the MOD. He said a committee had been set up to resolve such issues. GEN Petraeus reiterated that much of this friction is due to the culture of senior leaders feeling that they are immune from normal checkpoints and searches. The PM agreed that we should support the soldiers and police and change this cultural sense of privilege.

-- Pesticides: Minister of Agriculture al-Abudi asked for MNF-I security during the transportation, storage, and aerial spraying of pesticides. Petraeus agreed to provide whatever support was required.

-- Detainees: After Deputy National Security Advisor Safaa outlined a process for GOI-MNF-I work on detainees, al-Safi complained about what he described as flaws in the current Combined Review and Release Board process.

-- MEK: The Bolani-chaired committee on the MEK has been reactivated. The April 22 MCNS will discuss the situation with the MEK in more detail.

-- Housing and Land Issues: Bolani argued that Maliki needed to take action to resolve the situation of those without housing, noting that they often create a security situation by taking up residence illegally in public places. Maliki said that those living someplace illegally should be removed.

He said the larger issues of housing and land were more appropriate for the Cabinet than for the MCNS. END SUMMARY

Reactions to the April 12 Attacks

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¶2. (S) At the April 15 meeting of the Ministerial Committee for National Security (MCNS), MNF-I Commanding General Petraeus argued that one of the reasons terrorists had been successful in carrying out the April 12 bombing at the Council of Representatives was that far too many people in Iraq think that they are too important to do what is required of everyone else. Petraeus said that he was happy to be searched and so should Iraqi leaders, adding that they should set the example. He said that it was time to quit taking the side of Iraqi officials whose feelings get hurt because they were subject to a search, adding that these same Iraqi officials should be applauding the security officials for doing their jobs. Maliki agreed, pointing out that harassment of soldiers or police by officials discouraged the security forces from wanting to do their job properly.

¶3. (S) Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih reported that the destruction of Baghdad's Sarafiya Bridge on April 12 had led to large traffic problems in the city. He said that he had talked to MNF-I to see whether it could put up temporary bridges. Noting that he had heard that repairs on the bridge would take at least two months to complete, PM Maliki also asked whether the Coalition could help in any way. Petraeus said that he did not believe the Coalition had temporary bridging material large enough for the span, but promised to check into the issue further.

¶4. (S) Maliki said that an investigation would be conducted into how the driver of the Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (SVBIED) had been able to get past checkpoints and onto the bridge. Minister of Interior Bolani said that the security personnel who let the bomber and his vehicle through the checkpoint were being held for further investigation.

Karkh and Doura

¶5. (S) Maliki expressed frustration that clearing operations

were not taking place in Karkh and Doura. He said that Karkh was a well-known "incubator for terrorism." He said the number of troops in Karkh seemed insufficient for the threat, suggesting that perhaps some should be moved from Rusafa. Petraeus countered that there were not enough troops to do clearing and security operations simultaneously across all of Baghdad, adding that that would be true even if the entire U.S. Army were dispatched to Iraq, and thus the reason for the prioritized plan for the clearance of all the neighborhoods in Baghdad. Petraeus told Maliki that the MCNS should be a strategic level meeting and that he should not use it to say that troops should "go here or there." Petraeus said that such decisions should happen within the Crisis Action Cell, where an evaluation could be conducted of the risks and benefits of pulling units from one place for use someplace else. Petraeus used the opportunity to point out the importance of having all Iraqi units at full strength.

Umm Qasr: Iranian Incursions and Party Control of POE

16. (S) Iraqi Joint Headquarters Commander General Babakr said that the Iranians were creeping more and more everyday into Iraqi territorial waters around Umm Qasr. Minister of Interior Bolani said that his ministry was preparing a report on the issue for the Prime Minister. Babakr pointed out that the Iraqi Ministry of Interior was responsible for security along the Shaat al Arab, while the Ministry of Defense handled security in the Persian Gulf, adding that the GOI needed to coordinate closely with the MNF-I on this issue. Maliki said that the GOI needed to tell the Iranians to stop these incursions; Petraeus agreed that a demarche was in order. Maliki said that the MFA must make some communication with the Iranians on this issue.

17. (S) Babakr also said that facilities at the Umm Qasr Port of Entry were under the control of various political parties and their militias. Maliki asked acting Minister of Justice Safa al-Safi to report to him on the situation, adding for emphasis that if it was true the people involved should be "dumped in the water."

Basra Demonstration Threat

18. (S) Bolani reported on the planned April 16 demonstration

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in Basra against Provincial Governor Waeli, arguing that it was really a fight over power in the province. He said that there had been an increase in threats to the governor and that the security situation was deteriorating. He recommended that a curfew be imposed. DPM Barham Salih argued that the GoI should decide on the side of caution and pull back the demonstration permit. Maliki decided against the curfew -- arguing that it would look bad for the government to issue a curfew every time there was a threat -- but agreed to lift the license for the demonstration, as well as more fully examining those who had applied for the license. He said that he would cite the security situation as the reason for the license suspension. Petraeus and MNF-I Deputy Commanding General Lamb argued that a public announcement of the suspension include language indicating what the government planned to do to address the underlying concerns of the demonstrators.

19. (S) Al-Safi blamed the whole situation on Waeli, arguing that "all parties" wanted to get rid of the governor, but acknowledging that they did not have the required two-thirds vote on the provincial council to remove him. He said the situation left Waeli feeling above the law. Al Safi said that in contrast the Basra Emergency Committee was seen as a "neutral" entity. Al Safi claimed that MNF-I retracted a targeting of Waeli's brother. Petraeus said that he did not necessarily agree with al-Safi's analysis of the situation. Maliki said that he did not have the power to remove Waeli,

but had stripped him of his security responsibilities through the formation of the Emergency Committee.

National Security Strategy

¶10. (S) National Security Advisor Rubaie and Deputy National Security Advisor Safa'a said that Maliki should form a working group consisting of the "smartest brains" from the security ministries in order to draft a National Security Strategy (NSS) by July 14. Bolani and Minister of Defense Abdul Qader each said that their ministries already had long-term Strategies and thus such an NSS was unnecessary. Rubaie stressed that this was to be a strategy for the entire country, providing all ministries with an overarching framework of where the country is heading. Petraeus added that the NSS should help raise and address certain architectural issues within the Iraqi national security structure, such as competing intelligence services and the role of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief. He said that this would allow everyone to know who does what.

MOI/MOD Friction

¶11. (S) Bolani said friction sometimes existed in the field between the ministries of Interior and Defense. He cited the example of an MOI general that was arrested by the MOD. He said that a joint MOI-MOD committee had been formed to resolve incidents of this type. Maliki ordered an investigation into the arrest. GEN Petraeus commented that this was the same issue as with security at the CoR and involved the sense of senior leader entitlement. He argued that we all should applaud the soldiers and police who uphold standards of inspection at checkpoints rather than deride them for hassling senior leaders.

Pesticide Needs

¶12. (S) Minister of Agriculture al-Abudi asked for Coalition assistance to secure the transportation and storage of pesticides, confirming Petraeus' April 11 statement (reftel) that Diyala's pesticide supply had been stolen. He also asked for air and ground cover for his two crop-dusting planes, noting that he was risking his pilots' lives every time he sent them up. Petraeus said MNF-I was ready to supply whatever support was needed and would participate in an 16 April meeting to coordinate this support at MoD.

Detainees

¶13. (S) Following up on the previous week's discussion of detainees (reftel), Safa'a displayed a chart in Arabic purporting to show the process by which MNF-I and the GOI work together on the issue. Safa'a said that a joint committee should review detainees to determine whether: to transfer them to the judicial system, release them on

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conditions, or continue holding them based on the strength of the intelligence (not criminal evidence) against them. Al Safi complained that the current Combined Review and Release Board process was flawed, arguing that there were no real investigations, few documents were in Arabic, and the Coalition had the final say regardless of the vote of the Board. It was agreed to continue to study this issue.

MEK

¶13. (S) Rubaie said that the Bolani-chaired joint committee on the MEK had been re-activated. He said that the topic of the MEK would be discussed more fully at the April 22 MCNS meeting.

Housing and Land Issues

¶14. (S) Bolani raised the issue of people who do not have housing. He said many people face high rents, but have only low wages. He said this creates a security issue because these people will often take over, build, and live in public spaces. He said he hoped Maliki would develop a policy to show that the government was concerned about the need of everyone to have a home. Rubaie said the issue would require careful study before an intelligent discussion of the issue could occur. Maliki said steps needed to be taken to remove people from public spaces, but that the larger issue of housing and land issues was more appropriate for a meeting of the Cabinet, not the MCNS.

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